BRILL

Vivarium 45 (2007) 283-297

VIVA RIUM

www.brill.nl/viv

Intentionality and Truth-Making: Augustine's Influence on Burley and Wyclif's Propositional Semantics[1]

Laurent Cesalli
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i.Br.

Abstract
Walter Burley (1275-c.1344) and John Wyclif (1328-1384) follow two clearly stated doctrinal options: on the one hand, they are realists and, on the other, they defend a correspondence theory of truth that involves specific correlates for true propositions, in short: truth-makers. Both characteristics are interdependent: such a conception of truth requires a certain kind of ontology. This study shows that *a)* in their explanation of what it means for a proposition to be true, Burley and Wyclif both develop what we could call a theory of intentionality in order to explain the relation that must obtain between the human mind and the truth-makers, and *b)* that their explanations reach back to Augustine, more precisely to his theory of ocular vision as exposed in the *De trinitate* IX as well as to his conception of ideas found in the *Quaestio de ideis*.

Keywords
semantics, ontology, realism, intentionality, truth-making, medieval philosophy

Consider the two following questions: if propositional truth depends on a kind of correspondence relation between the mental (i.e. a mental proposition) and the non-mental (i.e. what that mental proposition is about), then how do we bridge the gap between the mental and the non-mental? And what kind of corresponding entity is responsible for the truth of so called non-standard propositions (i.e. propositions whose tense is not the present or whose subject-matter belongs to the past or the future)?

[1] I am very grateful to Prof. Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen and Prof. John Marenbon for their reading of and critical comments on a first draft of this paper, as well as to Meredith Ziebart for her help with the final English version of this study.

© Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2007 DOI: 10.1163/156853407X217777

The present study intends to reconstruct the solutions that were given to these problems by two prominent realist philosophers of the fourteenth century, Walter Burley (1275-c.1344) and John Wyclif (1328-1384). These solutions both display the remarkable common feature of all having been elaborated under Augustinian influence. Two facts constitute the background of this claim. First, when attempting to describe how what he calls a "real proposition" (*propositio in re*) is formed, Walter Burley calls upon Augustine and his theory of ocular vision as it is expounded in *De trinitate* XI, a theory in which the notion of *intentio* plays a central role.[2] Second, when Burley and Wyclif explain how one can generalize a rather strict correspondence-theory of truth, they both draw upon Augustine's *Quaestio de ideis.*[3] Accordingly, my aim is to show that reference to Augustine helped both Burley and Wyclif with two issues crucial for propositional semantics, namely intentionality and truth-making.

Following Aristotle but also Avicenna, most medieval philosophers, whether realist or nominalist, defend a correspondence theory of truth,[4] whereby to be true for a sentence is to correspond to something else. But not all medieval philosophers understand correspondence in the same way. The question then is: are there any proposition-specific correlates—we would say "states of affairs"—that make propositions true? This is where nominalists and realists disagree. The former deny the existence of such specific correlates, while the latter, often speaking of an "ultimate propositional significate", accept them.[5] Thus realist thinkers like Burley and Wyclif have to face the ontological challenge of providing specific correlates, at least for every true proposition,[6] while

---

2) For an excellent study of the relation between optics and vision theories on the one hand, and theory of knowledge and semantics on the other, see Tachau (1988).

3) For the medieval interpretation and reception of Augustine's *Quaestio de ideis,* cf. Hoenen (1997) and the 2004 issue of the "Revue thomiste", entirely devoted to that theme.

4) Cf. for example Aristote, *Metaphysics*, IX.10, 1051b1-8 and *Categories*, 5, 4a34-37, 4b8-10 and 12, 14b18-23. For the classical definition of truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* and its origin see for example Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q.1, a.1 (1970), 5.162-6.200, as well as Muckle (1933) for the origin of this definition by Isaac Israeli. For the avicennian definition, see Avicenna, *Philosophia prima*, I.8 (1977), 83.55.

5) Cf. for example John Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in primum et secundum librum Perihermeneias Aristotelis* (1639), q.2, n.4; Burley *Quaestiones super librum Perihermeneias* (1974), §3.553, *Liber Praedicamentorum* (1497), f.15vb-16ra; Wyclif, *Logice continuacio*, I.1 (1893), 77.

6) Falsity can be defined precisely as the absence of such correlate or with the correspondence to an abstract (non real) « false » correlate, cf. Gregory of Rimini (1978-1987), III, 228.25-229.2.

nominalists can get around the difficulty by claiming that such correlates are not needed at all.[7]

The questions of intentionality and truth-making raised above are of central importance for philosophical and theological issues: the philosophical issue is that of the status and the possibility of scientific knowledge in a contingent world; the theological one regards the relation between God and scientific truth. Indeed, our problematic does not pertain to propositional semantics alone, but to every domain of knowledge that is concerned with the status of objects of propositional attitudes. If specific propositional correlates do exist, they are not just ultimate significates or truth-makers of propositions, but also objects of knowledge and belief—what *p* stands for in 'I know/believe that *p*' is always a proposition.

From the first decades of the thirteenth century onwards, medieval intellectuals had to face a conflicting situation: on the one hand, the Aristotelian scientific paradigm as found in the *Posterior Analytics* requires all scientific knowledge to be universal and necessary,[8] on the other hand, the created world—that is: individuals, but also *species* and *genera*—is by definition contingent. Does this mean that God alone can be object *and* subject of genuine scientific knowledge? To avoid this awkward consequence, one had to find a solution that would be compatible with both the Aristotelian scientific exigency *and* the contingency of the created world.

Augustine's theory of ideas as expounded in his *Quaestio de ideis* offered such a solution. In this short text, Augustine turned Plato's abstract Ideas into ideas in the mind of God, thus providing, within the Christian framework, an essential link between every contingent being and its eternal and necessary counterpart.[9] The Platonic principle of participation made it possible for us to have intellectual knowledge of the necessary and universal components of contingent things.[10] This helped to provide a framework for "Aristotelian"

---

[7] Cf. for example Adam Wodeham (1990), 195.19-30, who says that the question '*quid est significatum propositionis?*' an ill-formed question is (*quaestio inepta*), since what a proposition does signify is not a *quid*, but an *esse quid.* Cf. also Gál (1967), 89 and Ockham (1974), 249-250.

[8] Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I.4 (1968), 194.25-31). This text was translated around 1150 by James of Venice. The first known latin commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* is due to Robert Grosseteste and is dated around 1220-1230, cf. Robert Grosseteste (1981), 18-9.

[9] Augustine, *Quaestio de ideis* (1975b), 70.1-71.32. For the medieval reception and tradition of Augustine's *Quaestio de ideis,* cf. Hoenen (1993), 121-156 and (1997), for literature, see pp. 245-246, n. 3-4, as well as Hoffmann (2002).

[10] Augustine, *Quaestio de ideis* (1975b), 71.33-73.64.

science in a contingent—that is created—world, a framework that was recognized and used by Burley and Wyclif in their propositional semantics. However, there arose a further, theological problem: if, as realist philosophers maintained, (i) true scientific propositions are made true by corresponding entities and (ii) all genuine scientific knowledge has to be universal and necessary, then the truth-makers of scientific propositions are universal and necessary entities subsisting alongside God, since not every scientific truth pertains to God. This was theologically problematic insofar as the view that there are eternal truths distinct from God had been repeatedly discussed and condemned by the church.[11] Thus, as we will see, realist philosophers like Burley and Wyclif are careful to develop their ontology without threatening God's uniqueness and simplicity.

Intentionality

Wyclif and the Truth That Pertains to the Logician

Discussing Book IV, chapter 6 of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, Wyclif gives a fourfold division of truth: truth, he says in his *De ente* (written between 1365-1375), is sometimes understood in a semantic way, that is as the correspondence by virtue of which a linguistic sign is true or false; sometimes, truth is understood in a semiotic way, that is when the sign itself is called a truth;[12] sometimes, it is understood is an ontological way, when extramental reality is called a truth; finally, truth is understood in an intermediate or mixed way, that is as an aggregate made out of ontological truth and a mental act: "*aggregatum ex veritate reali et actu anime.*"[13] Now Wyclif adds,

---

11) The condemned thesis reads "Quod multae veritates fuerunt ab aeterno, quae non sunt ipse Deus". The series of condemnations starts in 1241 with William of Auvergne, we find it mentioned in Bonaventure's Sentence Commentary (II, d.23, a.2, q.3) and it figures in the Parisian and Oxonian lists of errors condemned in 1277 respectively by Etienne Tempier and Robert Kilwardby. For a reconstruction of this intricate story, cf. De Libera (2002), 177-187.

12) The distinction between the semantic and the semiotic truth may be understood analogically to the distinction made by Anselm of Canterbury in *De veritate*, 2 between two kinds of propositional truth: "alia igitur est rectitudo et veritas enuntiationis, quia significat ad quod significandum facta est; alia vero, quia significat quod accepit significare" (Anselm (1946), 179.10-12). For a more detailed account of Wyclif's theory of propositional truth, see Cesalli (2005).

13) Wyclif (1909), 105.

> […] in order to explain the fourth kind of truth, one has to pay attention to the common opinion of the doctors, which is that some things are entirely outside the soul, such as wood, a stone, and the like; others are entirely within the soul, such as dreams and acts of the soul; however some things, they say, are partially inside and partially outside the soul, such as a universal, time, as well as other aggregates resulting of the operation of the intellect and extra-mental things. This is why philosophers say that the intellect produces universality in things.[14]

We shall see below that Walter Burley is most probably one of the *Doctores* Wyclif has in mind when he refers to a *vulgata sentencia doctorum*. According to Wyclif, the four kinds of truth can be distributed to different disciplines. Thus, the grammarian is interested in semiotic truth and the metaphysician in ontological truth. As for the first and the fourth kind of truth, they pertain to the logician[15] who considers the truth in a mixed way (*mixtim*), that is as an ontological truth as it is considered by the mind: "Thus the logician conceives in a mixed way that the proposition 'the world exists' is true on the side of things in so far as the mind thinks about it".[16] Summing up, truth as it pertains to the logician results from a mixed causality of extramental or ontological truth on the one hand, and a cognitive mental act, on the other. In modern terms, one could say that a true proposition is, according to the logician, an extra-mental truth present in the mind as a complex intentional object.

Burley and the "ens copulatum"

Burley introduces the notion of *propositio in re* in his so called middle commentary on the *Perihermeneias* (c.1310) to answer the following relativist objection: if the truth of a proposition is primarily in the mind, does this mean that there will be as many truths as there are minds composing them? Not at all, replies Burley. What is multiplied according to the number of

---

14) Ibid.: "Unde pro explanacione quarti membri, notanda vulgata sentiencia doctorum, que est: aliquod est totaliter extra animam, ut lignum, lapis, et cetera; aliquod totaliter in anima, ut sompnia et actus anime; aliquod autem, ut dicunt, partim in anima et partim extra animam, ut universale, tempus et cetera aggregata ex operacione intellectus et rebus extra. Unde dicunt philosophi quod intellectus facit universalitatem in rebus". For the authority according to which the intellect causes universality in things, cf. *Auctoritates Aritsotelis*, 6.27 (Hamesse (1974), 176), the source of which is Averroes, *In De anima* I, com. 8 (Averroes (1953), 12.25-26).

15) Wyclif (1909), 108: "Illud <sc. 'verum et falsum non sunt in rebus, sed in mente'> verum est de vero et falso primo et quarto modo dictis, quorum consideracio pertinet ad logicos, qui non consistunt citra composicionem et divisionem in anima".

16) Wyclif (1909), 109: "logicus autem concipit sic mixtim, quod 'mundum esse' est verum ex parte rei, ut mens cogitat".

individual intellects are mental *subjective* propositions, but their truth is itself dependent on their correspondence with an *objective* mental proposition that one can call, so says Burley, a *propositio in re*. Such an objective mental proposition is the ultimate propositional significate. Many years later, in his last commentary on the *Categories* (1337), Burley expounds his theory once again, and this time he is more careful to explain exactly what that ultimate propositional significate is. Let us now consider two features of this *propositio in re*.

First, it is described as being partly (*partim*) in the mind and partly outside the mind; more precisely, its formal part (the copula) is a mental act, while its material parts (subject and predicate) are extramental things.[17] A similar thesis is already present in Burley's early *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, which can be read as a synthesizing lecture on the last two cases of the Avicenno-Albertinian distinction between universals *ante rem, in re*, and *post rem.*[18]

Second, when it comes to the question of how such a hybrid item can possess any kind of unity, Burley calls upon the *De trinitate*, explaining the formation of the *propositio in re* according to the model of vision analysed in book XI of Augustine's theological treatise:[19] just as the sense of vision possesses a force called *intentio*, which is capable of maintaining the sense of vision coupled with a visible object, thus producing the actual vision of an extramental object, so the intellect possesses an *intentio* capable of producing the actual signification of an object:

> But one might ask here how it is that a single composite can be made from a thing existing in the intellect and a thing existing outside of the soul. To this it must be answered that

---

17) Burley (1497a), 16rb: "Unde cum propositio sit triplex, quaedam in prolatione, quaedam in conceptu et quaedam significata per propositionem in conceptu que potest dici propositio in re, propositio primo modo dicta, scilicet propositio in prolatione, est totaliter extra animam et talis propositio totaliter componitur ex vocibus que habent esse extra animam. Propositio vero composita ex conceptibus est totaliter in intellectu. Et compositio composita ex rebus partim est in intellectu et partim extra intellectum. Quantum ad suum formale est in intellectu sed quantum ad materialia est totaliter extra intellectum".

18) Burley, *Quaestiones super Porphyrium*, q. 7, quoted in Burley (1998), 78, n.18; Albert the Great, *De praedicabilibus*, II.3, (1889), 24a-b; Avicenna (1508), f.12ra. Avicenna himself takes this doctrine from the neoplatonic Commentators of Aristotle such as Ammonius and Simplicius. It ultimately goes back to Plato and Aristotle: the universal *ante rem* corresponds to the Platonic Idea, the universal *in re* to the Platonic participated form and the Aristotelian immanent form, the universal *post rem* to the abstract concept according to Aristotle, see De Libera (1996), 183-185, 501.

19) Augustine, *De trinitate*, XI, ii, 2. For the role of the notion of *intentio* in Augustine's theory of ocular vision and mental language, see Sirridge (1999).

> such a composite can be made by intellectual but not by real composition, and that such a composite can be called a copulated being; and a copulated being can be produced not only by the intellect, but also by the senses or by the intention of the senses. For Augustine says that intention couples the sense, or the operation of the sense, with the sensible object.[20]

In its most articulate and final formulation, then, Burley's theory of the *propositio in re* is explained along the lines of Augustine's analyses of ocular vision.

Both Burley and Wyclif describe a kind of logical object grounded in extramental reality as well as in mental activity. The former explains its formation in reference to the theory of vision as found in the *De trinitate*, the latter claims he is just reproducing a *vulgata sententia doctorum*, one of these doctors most probably being Burley himself.[21] A *propositio in re*, says Burley, is partly in the soul and partly outside of the soul, while according to Wyclif, the truth as it pertains to the logician is conceived in a "mixed way", that is: when a cognitive act is directed towards an extramental truth. In both cases, what is described is the ability of the mind to produce complex intentional objects.

Truth-Making

Burley and the Permanence of Truth

Burley defends a correspondence-theory of truth: a proposition is true if something corresponds to it and makes it true. More precisely, what makes a proposition true is the identity of the things signified respectively by the subject and predicate terms. Such a theory works well in simple, factual cases. But how about when the things which make a proposition true no longer exist? Burley considers and provides a solution to this kind of problem: the proposition '*Caesar est Caesar*', for example, is true *now* because there is *now* a relation of identity between Caesar and himself, not as a "being as it exists", but as a

---

[20] Burley (1497a), 16rb-va: "Sed dubium est hic qualiter potest fieri unum compositum ex re existente in intellectu et re existente extra animam. Dicendum quod ex talibus potest fieri unum compositum compositione intellectuali non autem compositione reali et tale compositum potest dici ens copulatum et potest fieri ens copulatum et non solum per intellectum sed etiam per sensum vel per intentionem sensus. Dicit enim beatus Augustinus quod intentio copulat sensum vel operationem sensus cum sensibili obiecto".

[21] Besides the patent similarities in Burley's and Wyclif's respective theories of the *ens copulatum* and of the *veritas quae pertinet ad logicum*, the claim that Wyclif knew Burley's theory of the proposition is supported by its explicit mention in the *De universalibus*, 1 (Wyclif (1985a), 21.85-92).

"super-transcendent being" or a "being that is common to all intelligibles".[22] Does this mean that anything one can think of can be the truth-maker of a proposition? Burley's insistence on the objective character of truth is certainly incompatible with such an interpretation. So what is that "being common to all intelligibles"? Let us try to clarify this point by considering some of Burley's other texts.

The problem here is what one can call the problem of the permanence of truth, that is, of the permanence of the *two* extremes of the correspondence relation which defines truth: a proposition and its truth-maker. To be able to deal with non-simple factual cases, Burley introduces into his theory an independence of *being* and *actual existence* on three different levels. We have just encountered the first with the example of the proposition '*Caesar est Caesar*'—the independence of the being of a truth-maker in regard to its actual existence *via* the notion of "being common to all intelligibles". The second is the independence of ontological truth in regard to the intellect. The third is the independence of the truth of any proposition in regard to its actual formation. All of these elements occur in the following text, taken from the so called middle commentary on the *Perihermeneias*, probably written around 1310:

> Thus I say that the thing signified by the proposition 'man is an animal' does not depend on the intellect, just as the truth of that thing does not depend on it; (…) The mental propositions that the intellect makes by perceiving such extra-mental truths correspond to things that are so related in reality. Thus I say that the truth which is subjectively in the intellect is nothing but a certain correspondence between the intellect and a proposition that is only objectively in the intellect. (…) Therefore, it is possible for the proposition 'man is an animal', insofar as it is subjectively in the intellect, not to exist, but insofar as it is objectively in the intellect, it is impossible for it not to be, or not to be true.[23]

---

22) Burley (1497b), 58rb: "Dicendum quod Caesare corrupto identitas est Caesaris ad Caesarem, sed illa identitas non existit, sed est identitas rationis. Et idem Caesarem idem Caesari identitate quae non est nec oportet quod idem et diversum semper sint differentie entis maxime transcendentis quod scilicet est in intellectu. Unde sic potest dici, quod ens dicitur dupliciter: uno modo ut est commune omni intelligibili, alio modo idem est quod existens. Sic idem et diversum dicitur uno modo ut sunt differentie entis transcendentis, alio modo ut sunt differentie entis in effectu, hoc est in actu existentis".

23) Burley (1973), §1.27: "Unde dico quod res significata per istam 'homo est animal' non dependet ab intellectu nec etiam veritas istius rei; (…) Istis tamen sic se habentibus in re correspondent propositiones in intellectu quas intellectus efficit ex hoc quod percipit tales veritates extra. Unde dico quod veritas quae est subiective in intellectu non est nisi quaedam adaequatio intellectus ad propositionem veram quae solum habet esse obiectivum in intellectu. (…) Unde ista 'homo est animal' quae est propositio habens esse subiective in intellectu potest non esse, tamen ista ut solum habet esse obiectivum in intellectu non potest non esse nec non esse vera".

We find the very same idea in Burley's *Super tractatum fallaciarum* (probably written at Oxford, in the first decade of the fourteenth century).[24] There, Burley considers an objection that is similar to the one mentioned above and in reply to which he had introduced the notion of *propositio in re*. In the *Super tractatum fallaciarum*, the problem is the following: Burley has just stated that insofar as a syllogism exists in the mind (*in mente*), it cannot cease to be, as opposed to what happens to written or spoken syllogisms. Now comes the objector: if the proper being of a syllogism is in the mind, then, when a syllogism is no longer in the same mind—for example not in my mind anymore, but in someone else's—it must cease to be; and thus, Burley's thesis of the permanent existence of a syllogism in the mind is mistaken. Burley's answer is surprising:

> Against this it is argued that if the proper being of a syllogism were in the mind, then it would cease to be if at some later point it were no longer in the same mind (…). To that, it must be replied that the being of a proposition or syllogism does not depend essentially upon my mind or yours, but upon the intellect of an intelligence from which it never recedes. Thus if a syllogism were now in a particular mind and then later not, it would cease to have the subjective being that it had, but would not cease to be essentially.[25]

There are two points of particular interest in this passage: the first is the explanation of the permanence of a proposition through a non-human intellect, that is, through the intellect of "some intelligence" (*intellectus alicuius intelligentiae*);[26] the second is the link implicitly made here between the objective being of a proposition and the intellect of that intelligence. In other words, when Burley says of a proposition as being objectively in the soul that it is impossible for it not to be, nor to be untrue (cf. Burley (1973), §1.27 cited

---

24) Burley (2003), 151-207 (197-207).

25) Burley (2003), 200: "Contra illud arguitur: si proprium esse syllogismi esset in mente, si postea non sit in eadem mente, desinit inesse (…). Ad illud dicendum quod esse propositionis vel syllogismi non dependet essentialiter a mente mea vel tua, sed essentialiter dependet ab intellectu alicuius intelligentiae a quo numquam recedit. Unde si aliquis syllogismus nunc sit in mente alicuius et postea non, desinit habere esse subiectivum quod habuit, non tamen desinit esse essentialiter".

26) As S. Ebbesen remarks (Burley (2003), 156): "It is no common place in works of logic to appeal to the intellect of an intelligence, *i.e.* of a separate substance, in order to provide propositions with a permanent essence". For the incorporation of the (originally Aristotelian) intelligences, that is intellectual and non-material substances, into medieval latin Philosophy, see for example Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, c. IV. Besides Avicenna's *Metaphysica* or *Philosophia prima*, the neoplatonic *Liber de Causis* plays a prominent role in that process of integration.

above p. 290), he might mean its being objectively contained in the intellect of a non-human intelligence.[27]

In this respect, it is worth comparing what Burley says in the above cited texts with what can be found in his later metaphysical treatise *De universalibus* (written after 1337). The whole fifth chapter of that treatise can be seen as a commentary on Augustine's *Quaestio de ideis*. There, Burley asks the following question: "whether <universals> exist in God, as those say who assert that the divine mind contains ideas representing the images of created things, or whether they exist per se outside of the divine mind". His answer is that universals, or ideas, do exist in the divine intellect, but one has to be careful not to identify *simpliciter* ideas with the divine essence.[28] An idea, according to Burley, is a kind of connotative entity. In its "principal" dimension, an idea in the divine mind is really identical with the divine essence; in its connotative dimension however, it is different from it. For example, in their "principal" dimension, that is, as pre-representations of creatures, the ideas both of man and horse are identical with the divine essence; but the *connotata* (Burley also speaks of *ydeata*) of those ideas, that is, the creatures man and horse, are distinct from the divine essence:

> Therefore Augustine says in his book *On 83 Questions*, that they <*i.e.* ideas> were from eternity exemplary models representing things to be created (…). (…) the idea of man and the idea of horse are really identical, because they are the same as the divine essence; nevertheless, they are different with respect to their connotation, because the idea of man connotes man and not horse, and the idea of horse connotes horse and not man.[29]

---

27) In question 4 of his *Quaestiones super Sophisticos Elenchos* (Burley (2003), 162), Burley also mentions a non-human intelligence in his argumentation. As a reply to an objection according to which a vocal sound (*vox*) cannot be equivocal because, as a bearer of forms, a vocal sound cannot bear at the same time different forms of the same kind (in the present case, different *rationes significandi*), Burley states that this would be true if the *rationes significandi* were real forms like whitenesses for example. However, the *rationes significandi* at stake are not real but intentional forms (*formae intentionales*) which can exist simultaneously in the same subject as, for example, a vocal sound. To reinforce his answer, Burley describes the case of the separate intelligences "who contain eternally all the *species* of intelligible things".

28) Burley (1998), 52: "Ex istis potest patere error quorundam dicencium quod omnes res intellectae a deo ab eterno sunt idem quod essencia divina".

29) Burley (1998), 46-48: "Et ideo ponit Augustinus in libello suo *De Octoginta Tribus Questionibus* quod ab eterno fuerunt <sc. Ydee> exemplaria representancia res faciendas. (…) ydea hominis et ydea equi sunt idem realiter, quia sunt idem quod essencia divina, sunt tamen diversa quantum ad connotata, quia ydea hominis connotat hominem et non equum, et ydea equi connotat equum et non hominem".

Now, as things to be created the *connotata* or *ydeata* horse and man are eternally and objectively present in the divine mind, and are distinct from the divine essence only in an intelligible way.[30]

We can now, I think, try to bring together the different pieces of the puzzle: the problem of the permanence of truth, that is, of the generalisation of a correspondence-theory of truth, is solved by Burley thanks to the notion of the objective being of universal natures, propositions and syllogisms, in the precise sense of their being permanent objects of permanent intellection by a non-human intellect. In his earlier logical works, Burley speaks of *intelligentia*; in his later metaphysical tract on universals, he speaks of the divine mind and explicitly links his solution of the problem with his interpretation of Augustine's *Quaestio de ideis*. Coming back to the example we started from, we can now say that what grants the truth of a proposition like '*Caesar est Caesar*' where Cesar is not alive anymore, is the identity of Cesar with himself as objectively present in, that is, eternally thought by, a non-human intellect.[31]

Wyclif and Divine Truth-Making

There is a very strong truth-making principle in Wyclif's thought. As Antony Kenny puts in the notes of his translation of the *De universalibus* (c.1374): "According to <Wyclif>, predication <is> not just the attachment of a predicate to a subject within a sentence, but the feature of the real world which makes such a predication true."[32]

As we did in Burley, we also find in Wyclif the idea that truth possesses a kind of permanence by being permanently the object of intellection of some intellect—human, or non-human. In his *De ente*—a metaphysical work already mentioned when examining Wyclif's typology of truth[33]—he states that if one wants to know which of the four kinds of truth depend on an intellect, and

30) Burley (1998), 50-54: "Dicendum quod ydeata fuerunt eterna obiective in essencia divina, hoc est ab eterno erant representata et intellecta a deo. (…). Concedo quod res creanda est aliud a deo accipiendo ly 'aliud' ut est differentia entis transcendentis; et eciam quoad ens accipiendo ly 'ens' ut est nomen maxime transcendens, quia ens isto modo dictum est convertibile com hoc communi 'intelligibile'".

31) Similar theories of the permanence of truth are found in Augustine's *Soliloquia* (II.2), Gregory of Rimini's *Lectura* (1978-1987), t. 3, 228 and in the Abreviatio of Adam Wodeham's *Lectura* by Henry Totting of Oyta (1512), 118r.

32) Wyclif (1985b), 182.

33) See above, p. 286.

which do not, one has to say that each kind of truth depends on an intellect, provided we do not restrict the notion of intellect to the human one.[34]

Thus, the semantic and semiotic truths of a sentence, the truth of a judgment as considered by a logician and the ontological truth of reality all are dependent on an intellect: the first three depend immediately on the human intellect, the fourth on the divine intellect. But *all four* depend ultimately on the divine intellect, and this for two reasons:[35] first, because whatever is created or caused exists primarily in the divine intellect; second, because the divine intellect is responsible for the intelligibility of the world with respect to our intellectual faculty as well as its possible objects. As for necessary truths like mathematical propositions, they depend only on the divine intellect. Indeed, says Wyclif, if all intellects were destroyed—read: all *human* intellects—God would still know that 2 plus 3 equals 5.[36] Still, and even if there cannot be any human science capable of giving an accurate account of such truths *per se*, they nevertheless have a cause:

> And thus there cannot be a science that would be adequate to those sacred things that are analytical truths. Therefore, Augustine writes in *De doctrina Christiana* book 2, chapter 32: 'that truth of connections has not been instituted, but only noticed by human beings, since it is in the eternal nature of things by divine institution'.[37]

We, as human, can grasp these divine truths, not because we are able to see what is in the divine mind, but because the intelligibility of created things somehow provides us with access to those eternal truths. Now if God, or the divine mind, is the ultimate cause of such necessary truths, one must be careful on one hand, not to identify them *simpliciter* with God (because they are many, and God is one), and on the other hand, not to separate them *simpliciter* from God (because if anything is eternal, then that thing can only be God):

---

34) Wyclif (1909), 105-106.

35) Wyclif (1909), 108.

36) Wyclif (1909), 105. Although mathematical true propositions like '2 + 3 = 5' are not ontological truths in the same sense as, for example, the existence of Socrates is one (if Socrates exists), they share a common property with the ontological truth, namely their subsisting independently of any human intellect. Furthermore, Wyclif suggests a connection between mathematical and ontological truth.

37) Wyclif (1909), 105-106: "Et tamen inpossibile sit dari sciencia proporcionata illis sanctis que de virtute sermonis sunt veritates. Unde Augustinus, 2° *De doctrina christiana* 32°, sic scribit: 'illa veritas coneccionum non instituta est, set animadversa ab hominibus, cum sit in rerum racione perpetua et divinitus instituta". For the reference to Augustine, see *De doctrina Christiana*, II.32.

> (…) no such truth, although it has existed forever, expresses an essence or a nature which is eternal in such a way that it can only be God. (…) Nevertheless, formally speaking, there is no doubt that they are mutually distinct, as well as distinct from God, as we read in Augustine's question 46 *De ydeis.*[38]

Necessary or eternal truths are in God just as other *res rationis* are in Him, that is: without having to be really distinct from Him. There is a real identity and a formal distinction in God between its essence and, for example, eternal truths.[39] Making God's intellect the place where necessary or eternal truths subsist, is not very original. But Wyclif goes one significant step further: in addition, contingent truths like possibilities, past and future truths also subsist in the divine intellect. Moreover these truths are said to be signified by the corresponding propositions.[40]

Certainly, when we utter a true proposition such as, for example, '*Sor est homo*', we are not talking about God's intellect nor about its content. But if it so happens that the proposition '*Sor est homo*' *is* true, what makes it true, ultimately *is* in the divine intellect. As Wyclif puts it in the *De universalibus*, commenting Augustine's *Quaestio de ideis:*

> And if it is asked: what is such an ability to produce <truth>? It is replied that it is nothing which differs essentially from God. Thus, formally, it is not something but a thing of reason, it does not belong to any created genus but it is present by reduction in the same genus in which is its *ideatum*, since it is its principle, just as the idea of human being is in the human species, and consequently in the genus of substance, and in a way, speaking about the species, it is per se the species of human being.[41]

What makes propositions true, regardless of their contingency or necessity, are the intelligible traces left by God's Ideas in creation.[42] The Ideas themselves are

---

38) Wyclif (1909), 106: "(…) nulla talis veritas, quamvis sit eterna a parte ante, dicit aliquam essenciam vel naturam sic eternam, nisi solum deum. (…) Et tamen, loquendo formaliter, non <est> dubium quin distinguntur ab invicem et a deo, ut patet per Augustinum *De ydeis* questione 46".

39) Wyclif (1909), 112.

40) Wyclif (1909), 111.

41) Wyclif (1985a), 373: "Et si quaeratur: quid est talis productibilitas? Dicitur quod nihil essentialiter nisi Deus. Formaliter autem non est aliquid sed res rationis, non per se in aliquo genere creato sed per reductionem in eodem genere in quo est suum ideatum cum sit eius principium, ut idea hominis est in specie humana, et per consequens in genere substantiae, et uno modo, loquendo de specie, est per se species hominis (…)".

42) In the following lines of the text quoted in the previous note, Wyclif calls upon Robert Grosseteste and his own conception of the relation between divine ideas and universals as exposed in his commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, I.7, Cf. Robert Grosseteste (1981), 139.96-142.157.

in the divine mind, but what human beings can grasp directly and start from in their intellectual activity, are in the created things themselves as *ideata*.

Conclusion

Let us conclude with three points. First, this short study of the Burleyan *propositio in re* and the Wyclifian *veritas quae pertinet ad logicum* has shown that Wyclif's approach is dependent upon Burley's, whose model is in turn Augustine's description of ocular vision in the *De trinitate*. The common preoccupation of these three thinkers is with an explanation of how the mind, interacting with the extra-mental world by means of its *intentio*, produces specific, *intentional* objects: the content of sense perception, for Augustine, the truth which pertains to the logician, for Wyclif, and for Burley, the ultimate significate of propositions.[43]

Second, when, in the context of correspondence-theories of truth as we have them in Burley and Wyclif, it comes down to the question of how such theorie work in cases in which no actual signifcates exist—as in the case of true propositions about non-existent objects, or in the case of eternal truths—both Burley and Wyclif call upon a non-human intellect as the place where *that* which can be expressed by human sentences subsists as a permanent object of thought; and they do so in reference to Augustine's *Quaestio de ideis*.

Third, as for the specific question of the permanence of a proposition which is not actually formed by anyone, Burley seems to rely, on at least two occasions, on an Avicennian-like cosmological gnoseology. In spite of the fact that the terminology and the dialectical context of these passages are similar to those in which Burley uses Augustine's *Quaestio de ideis*, one cannot, I think, simply replace '*intelligentia*' in the earlier texts by '*mens divina*'—one sufficient reason for that being that the plural '*intelligentiis*' used there by Burley is incompatible with divine simplicity.

This brief analysis of Burley's and Wyclif's solutions to the crucial problems of (*a*) giving an explanation of mind/world interaction and (*b*) generalizing a strict correspondence theory of truth, has shown that Augustine played an important role in such matters in the fourteenth century. Realist thinkers like

---

[43] For the role played by Augustine not only in medieval theories of intentionality, but also in Franz Brentano's characterization of intentional objects as possessing a so called mental inexistence, see Perler (2002), 403-405.

Burley and Wyclif found in Augustine's works, besides his definition and classification of signs, and theory of the inner word, constitutive elements for the semantic and ontological aspects of their propositional logic. These elements became constituent of what we may call their theories of intentionality and truth-making.